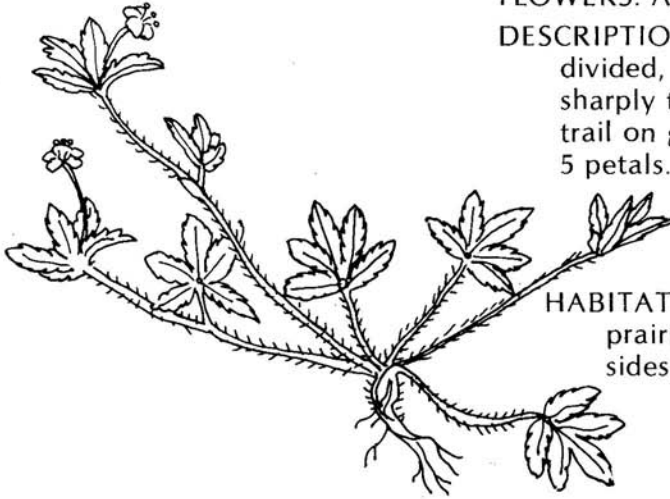


CINQUEFOIL (*Potentilla simplex*)

FLOWERS: April - June

DESCRIPTION: Leaves divided, 5 leaflets, sharply toothed. Stems trail on ground. Flowers 5 petals. Rose Family.



HABITAT: Open woods, prairies, fields, roadsides, railroads

67

LOCATION: Throughout

COLLECTION: March - June

USES: Tea

This common species, also known as five-finger, has a five-parted leaf and is a dense carpet as a ground cover. The flowers are yellow and the entire plant slightly resembles a wild strawberry plant whose leaves are 5- rather than 3-parted.

The early leaves may be dried and used as a tea substitute which is rich in calcium. The Shrubby Cinquefoil leaves are reported to be best.

Schaeffer states that cinquefoil is a drug source used to treat muscle spasms, while Hatfield gives it powers in witchcraft, love potions, as a mouth wash and gargle for sore throats, pimples and sunburn.

Already it is taking on qualities of the old herb medicine bottle that was good for whatever ails you.

As a tea, the taste is good and the color a golden tone. Just drinking it makes me feel protected from evil spirits and witches, cleared of sore throat and bad breath. Not only that, but the drop that slid down my chin might clear up the complexion!!!

SMOOTH SUMAC (*Rhus glabra*, *R. typhina*, *R. copallina*, *R. aromatica*)

FLOWERS: May - July

DESCRIPTION: Shrub, leaves alternate and compound with leaflets of 9 - 27, toothed, pointed. Flower is upright cluster, greenish-yellow. Cashew Family.

68 HABITAT: Prairies, thickets, abandoned fields, borders of and woods openings, roadsides, railroads

LOCATION: Every county

COLLECTION: Summer, fall
dried all winter

USES: Drink, jelly



Indian lemonade is made from the bright red berries of the sumac. To make this delicious drink, mash or bruise some berries in water, then stir or mash them for several minutes. Strain the liquid through cheese cloth several times to remove the fine hairs. These same hairs gave the drink its tangy flavor originally. Because this pink drink has a sour flavor resembling lemonade and was prepared by the Indians, it has been called Indian Lemonade. Gibbons very cleverly called this cold, sweetened drink "Rhus jhus."

Once I collected the berries too early in the summer and the drink, while somewhat bitter, tasted like a dry, unfermented wine.

The juice from the sumac berries makes a jelly worthy of a meat compliment. This jelly is made by covering the entire heads with water and steaming for 10 minutes. Pour off the liquid, strain,

add matching amounts of sugar, 1 box pectin per 4 cups of juice and cook until it slithers off the spoon. Remove from the stove, skim off the white, foamy top and seal in sterilized jars or cover with paraffin. One might note that boiling the berries renders a rather disagreeable flavor which is and was used for sore throats.

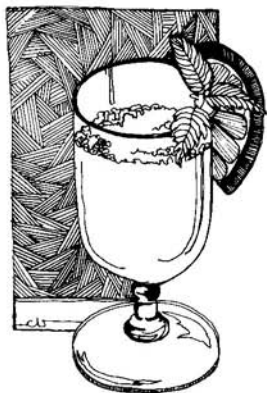
The heads of sumac berries may be picked and dried for winter use. A hot drink is produced by putting the berries in the top of a coffee pot and letting them perk.

It might be wise to include the fact that only the red berries of sumac are edible; the sumac which bears white berries is said to be poisonous.

Fragrant sumac (*Rhus aromatica*) is often confused with poison ivy. While there are leaves of three, the fragrant sumac leaf is more rounded and does not have the sharp leaf tip of poison ivy. The leaf, when crushed, is very fragrant and aromatic.

Berries of fragrant sumac are hairy in appearance, round and in tight clusters. They contain a high acidity, which makes them choice fruits for pink lemonade. They may be used in any of the above recipes.

Drive along any country road, and look along the superhighways. My guess is you can't miss finding this wild edible.



PRICKLY PEAR (*Opuntia compressa*)

FLOWERS: May - July

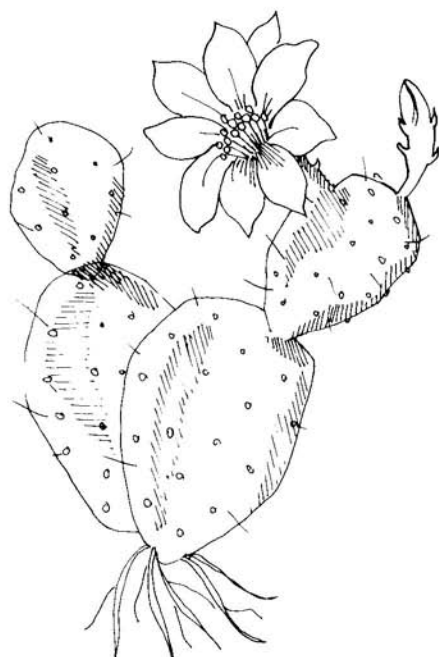
DESCRIPTION: Thick, flat, pad-like stems, spines. Cactus Family.

HABITAT: Rocky open glades, rocky prairies, fields, open woods, railroads

LOCATION: Southern and central Missouri

COLLECTION: Fruit, October - December

USES: Vegetable



One November when I was visiting my folks' cabin at Lake Wappapello, I ran across a large, fruit-bearing prickly pear. The fruit was a reddish brown and about the size of my thumb. I suppose the shape gives it a nickname of Indian Fig. I slit the end off, cut down the length of it and ate the pulp. It was palatable, in no way disagreeable and not like a fig in flavor.

Fernald and Kinsey suggest that the thick leaflike stems of this cactus can be roasted in a campfire, peeled and eaten. It's slimy but edible.

A word of warning about picking or handling the prickly pear. The thick stems *appear* to have a smooth surface around the obvious prickly points. *Do not* let the smooth appearance fool you! If you try to pick them by carefully placing thumb and forefinger in the clear areas, tiny, almost invisible prickles will plant themselves in your skin.

I have spent an hour removing these fine spines from the hand of someone who attempted such a feat. Once they're in your skin, everything you touch only serves to embed them deeper.

This plant is well named!!!



GROUND CHERRY (*Physalis*
.. various species)

FLOWERS: May - August

DESCRIPTION: Bell-shaped flower in leaf axis. Leaf variety great in different species, but triangular in shape, usually alternate. Nightshade Family.

HABITAT: Open dry ground, railroads, fields, waste ground, sandy soils, gravel bars

LOCATION: Statewide

COLLECTION: July - October

USES: Preserves, jelly, pie, fresh

71

The ground cherry has a sprawling ability, and while remaining 6" to 12" tall, can cover several feet on the ground. The yellow bell or funnel flower is replaced with a papery, shell-like Chinese lantern. The shell becomes a tan color while the cherry inside is a greenish color which turns to yellow then orange. The pod falls to the ground and continues to ripen. To use these "cherries," which are tomato relatives and no real kin to the cherry, husk them out of their inch-size shell.

A jam or jelly, using 3 cups liquid to 3 cups sugar and Sure-Jell, can be made from the fruits. If you are making jam, remember you do not add the Sure-Jell, but you do need the pulp from the fruit. To get the pulp, run the fruits through a colander. The addition of lemon juice and peel makes an improved jelly. Preserves are made by boiling 3 cups sugar, 1 cup water, 1 lemon thinly sliced and 1 cinnamon stick for 10 minutes. Add a quart of ground cherries and boil until clear and the juice is thick. Let it set overnight, bring to a boil the next day and pour into jars. In Hawaii, Gibbons says, this is called Poha Preserves.

Gibbons uses the fruits for a pie which he says combines the taste of apples and apricots. Make your crust for a 9" pie pan. Fill with 3 cups husked, washed cherries. Pour over a sauce of $\frac{1}{4}$ cup flour, 1 cup sugar, $\frac{1}{4}$ t salt, $\frac{1}{4}$ t cinnamon and juice of a lemon. Put on a top crust and bake for 45 minutes in a 350-degree oven.

The paper Chinese lantern shell makes such a cute home for the cherry tomato inside!





GOATSBEARD (*Tragopogon dubius*)

FLOWERS: May - July

DESCRIPTION: Leaves long, thin, both basal and alternate on stem. Flower and seed head dandelion-like. Composite Family.

HABITAT: Roadsides, fields, meadows, railroads, waste ground

LOCATION: Scattered in north, central and eastern Missouri

73

COLLECTION: Greens, early spring; Roots, autumn - spring

USES: Potherb, vegetable

My first experience with the yellow flowering goatsbeard, also called salsify, was along a highway (when we used to drive 70 mph) and I thought it to be the largest variety of dandelion I'd ever seen! A search through the wildflower books proved it to be the goatsbeard.

My first experience at fixing it to eat was not a successful one, either. I located the pretty flowering plant and dug up the root which was about the size of a good dandelion tap root. I took my roots home, washed them, scraped and boiled them. They were extremely woody and inedible. I sucked out the juices and spit out the fibers. Further reading gave me insight into my problem. The roots are to be collected before the flowering bloom stalk shoots up or after the plant has faded out. This period is while the starch is still in the roots. One needs to stake out the spots for winter digging.

The roots may be fixed in a variety of ways. One way is to peel, cut the root into small chunks and simmer in water until a fork will stick into them easily, just as you would check on potatoes. Pour off the water, salt, pepper and serve with butter or cover with a white sauce. Angier suggests French-frying the root. To do this, cut the root lengthwise, coat with flour, salt and pepper mixture, dip into an egg and cream batter and roll in bread crumbs. Melt oleo in a pan (about $\frac{1}{2}$ stick per person to be served) and fry each root piece so that it is separated from the rest.

The early leaves go into the greens pot and the shoots may be boiled and buttered.

DANDELION (*Taraxacum officinale*)

FLOWERS: January -
December

DESCRIPTION: Rosette, leaves long, narrow, lobed. Yellow flower quickly followed with seed stalk. Composite Family.

HABITAT: Lawns, gardens, around dwellings, fields, meadows, roadsides, railroads

LOCATION: Statewide

COLLECTION: Leaves, March - April; Flowers, April - July; Roots, September - Spring

USES: Salad, potherb, coffee, wine, pancake, vegetable



Dandelions are praised by most wild edible authors as being king of the potherb set. Its availability and rich vitamin and

mineral value make it a healthful, sought-after member for a spring greens mess. I have tried the dandelion in a number of ways and simply cannot find many ways I'm very enthusiastic about.

The bitter taste becomes more pronounced if boiled first in water that begins cold. As with milkweed, the bitterness is reduced by starting in boiling water and boiling in three separate waters for one minute each. Your yard variety, or any close-cropped dandelion, tends to be extremely bitter and tough. The best species are obtained from fields or roadsides where they have been "let go."

When gathered, as the first leaves are unfolding in the early spring, the raw leaf may be added sparingly to a tossed salad or tried in scrambled eggs.

Dandelion pancakes are made by adding the yellow flowers to a pancake batter. Gather the flower heads in the morning and carefully remove the bitter green calyx. The flower is made up of many small, thin individual flowers which are stirred into the batter. If you have finicky eaters in your house, sprinkle the flowers over the individual pancakes. This way you may fix plain or dandelion pancakes at the same time. Waffles can be made the same way. I do like this method of using the dandelion.

Another use for the flowers is in making dandelion wine. Pick the flowers early in a morning with little or no dew. Again, exclude the bitter calyx and press the flowers into a crock and pour boiling water over them. For two gallons of flower heads, use one gallon hot water. Let the mixture set for three days. Strain, add rind and pulp of three oranges and three lemons, three pounds of sugar and 1 ounce yeast. Cover this and leave for three weeks. After three weeks, strain, bottle and cap.

Underground, the root may be scrubbed, pared, sliced thin and cooked. I have found this not worth the trouble unless I were perhaps depending on survival foods. Another use for the roots is as a coffee substitute. Bake the scrubbed roots in a 275-degree oven for four hours, or until the roots snap and are dark brown inside. They make a hot, coffee-like drink when ground. This isn't good, but it isn't bad, either. The greatest problem is to grind the roots once they are baked.

If none of these ideas grab you, pick the seed head and blow three times. The remaining seeds are reported to tell time, future children, marriages, money in the bank and life expectancy. All it tells me is that the chances are good for a heavier dandelion population in that immediate area!!!

SUNFLOWER (*Helianthus* ...
various species)

FLOWERS: May - November

DESCRIPTION: Species vary,
often rough stem, alter-
nate, toothed leaves.
Composite Family.

HABITAT: Waste and culti-
vated ground, low
meadows, prairies, road-
sides, railroads

LOCATION: Statewide,
especially northern and
central Missouri

COLLECTION: Fall

USES: Breadstuff, coffee
substitute



76

The Indians used this wild food to full advantage. Having a bit of Indian blood in me, the lure of the past was paramount in my using the sunflower.

I found it best to cut the seedheads and allow them to dry indoors. Otherwise, if left on the stalk to dry, I lost most of the seeds to the birds.

My daughters are fond of the packages of commercial sunflower seeds. Soaking the dried seeds in salt water and roasting in a 300-degree oven gives a rather good nibble. The shelled portion is eaten and the outside shell discarded.

The shelled seed may be ground and used as a meal. To shell, use a rolling pin to crack open the nuts and drop them in a bowl of water. The seeds will sink while the shells float. Dry and roast the seeds for coffee or nuts. Angier suggests trying this Sunflower Cake recipe. Use 2 cups hulled sunflower seeds, 2 cups water, $1\frac{1}{2}$ t salt. Put in a pan, cover and simmer for an hour, stirring occasionally. Place in a blender and puree. Cool the mixture, add 4 T cornmeal. Mold into 2" cakes. Heat $\frac{2}{3}$ cup of oil in skillet and fry cakes on both sides.

Although the roasted, crushed, boiled shells alone may be used for coffee, the roasted seeds steeped in boiling water yield a better coffee.

JERUSALEM ARTICHOKE

(*Helianthus tuberosus*)

FLOWERS: August - October

DESCRIPTION: Tall plant,
5' - 10'; leaves oblong,
rough, pointed tip, thick
near stalk. Flowerheads
2" - 3", several on
plant. Composite
Family.

HABITAT: Moist thickets,
border of streams,
ponds, moist and dry
woods, prairie wet
spots, waste ground,
railroads, roadsides

LOCATION: Statewide

COLLECTION: October -
January

USES: Salad, vegetable,
pickle



77

In *The Treasury of Botany*, W.B. Booth tells the story of the Jerusalem Artichoke. "Before the potato became plentiful ... they were used in this country [England] ... They were so common in London that even the vulgar began to despise them. They were baked in pies, along with marrow, dates, ginger, etc. and, being so plentiful and cheap, rather bred a loathing than a liking for them. Hence it appears that, as the culture of the potato extended, it gradually displaced the Jerusalem Artichoke..."

Our favorite canoe float is the North Fork River. The owner of the privately-owned campgrounds at Athelia Springs has an 80-year-old man who helps him. This gentleman is an organic

gardener who cultivates beautiful Jerusalem artichokes. He collects the irregular-shaped tubers in the fall and freezes them. He says to cook them as a potato — fried, mashed, or baked. They aren't at all bad in any of the ways mentioned if not cooked too long or too fast.

My choice for the tuber is in a salad. The Jerusalem artichoke may be grated raw along with a variety of other raw vegetables and mixed with mayonnaise for a delicious raw salad. The tuber is crisp, white in color and very good.

The tuber makes a good addition to your dill crock. Cut the peeled tubers into pickle-sized chunks. Follow the recipe for Dill Crock on page 7. After pickling, pack into sterilized jars tightly, cover with brine solution and boil in hot water for 20 minutes after sealing jars.

Who says ANYTHING these days can be too cheap or plentiful for our liking?????

